

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 OC-05 CCO-00 SY-05 A-01

OPR-02 EB-07 COME-00 FS-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 FAA-00

CAB-02 USIE-00 INRE-00 DHA-02 AID-05 PC-01 L-03 OMB-01

PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 H-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

DODE-00 PRS-01 PA-01 USSS-00 SCCT-01 EUR-12 DOTE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3463

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMCONSUL DOUALA

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2129

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BTRA, CASC, NI

SUBJECT: AMERICANS STRANDED IN NIGERIA

REF: STATE 42871

1. IN ANSWER TO EMBASSY'S QUESTIONS, FMG CIVIL AIR DIRECTOR TODAY STATED THAT AIRPORTS CLOSURE IS QTE DUE TO CURRENT SITUATION IN COUNTRY. UNQTE HE HAS DECLINED TO ELABORATE FURTHER, BUT OUR VIEW IS THAT CONTINUED CLOSURE AND HIS RETICENCE AT LEAST PARTLY BASED ON FMG FEAR THAT STILL UNIDENTIFIED COUP CONSPIRATORS MAY ESCAPE BEFORE BEING DISCOVERED AND APPREHENDED.

2. NO OFFICIAL PROJECTION YET AS TO WHEN AIRPORTS MAY REOPEN
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FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL. ON RETURN FROM NORTHERN NIGERIA

THIS MORNING, COMMISSIONER FOR CIVIL AVIATION TOLD PAN AM MANAGER THAT HE QTE HOPED AIRPORT WOULD RESUME INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS ON WEDNESDAY, UNQTE PAN AM IS REVISING ITS CONTINGENCY PLAN HOURLY AND IS READY TO REROUTE LIBREVILLE-NEW YORK PAA FLIGHT TO PICK UP PASSENGERS HERE AT 1800 HRS FEB 25 IF AIRPORT OPEN BY THEN.

3. WE HAVE SO FAR COMPILED LIST OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM 22 AMERICAN COMPAINES WHO WISH TO EXIT. LIST OF FIRMS WILL BE SENT BY SEPARATE MESSAGE. ROUGH ESTIMATE IS THAT STRANDED AMERICANS APPROXIMATE 250. IN ANSWER TO OUR QUESTIONING, AIRLINES FEEL UNABLE TO ESTIMATE NUMBER OTHER NATIONALITIES, BUT LOCAL PAN AM SPOKESMEN THINK TOTAL MAY GO AS HIGH AS QTE SEVERAL THOUSAND. UNQTE

4. MOST STRANDED AMERICANS STILL APPEAR CALM AND RESIGNED BUT SOME ARE INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED OVER PLIGHT SINCE END OF MOURNING PERIOD. SEVEN INDIVIDUALS HAVE INQUIRED WHETHER EMBASSY PLANS USE ANY DIPLOMATIC MECHANISM TO ACHIEVE BREAKTHROUGH.

5. FMG OFFICIALS VERY GUARDED ON EXPRESSING ATTITUDES TOWARD SITUATION OF STRANDED TRAVELERS.

6. ALL INDICATIONS FROM FMG ARE THAT ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF TRANSPORT IN OR OUT OF COUNTRY WOULD BE PROHIBITED UNTIL INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL RESUMED. UK HIGH COMMISSION INFORMED THAT BRITISH SUBJECTS TRYING TO CROSS BENIN BORDER WITHOUT VISAS HAVE BEEN SEIZED AND JAILED.

7. AT THIS SENSITIVE TIME WITH PUBLIC FEELING CONCENTRATED AGAINST US AND UK WE RECOMMEND THAT EMBASSY NOT RPT NOT SEEK ANYTHING RESMEBLING SPECIAL FAVOR FOR AMERICANS, I.E., SPECIAL AUTHORIZATION TO EMPLOY ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR TRANSPORTING AMERICANS OUT OF NIGERIA. WE ALSO BELIEVE PRIVATE APPROACH TO FMG BY AMERICAN OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES IN NIGERIA WOULD RECEIVE NEGATIVE REACTION FROM GOVERNMENT AND POSSIBLY HARMFUL PUBLICITY RE WESTERN ATTEMPTS TO DEMAND PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT. WE ARE, HOWEVER, NOW EXPLORING POSSIBILITY OF JOINT DIPLOMATIC
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CORPS EFFORT TO RESOLVE IMPASSE.

8. WE WILL RELAY FURTHER INFORMATION AS SOON AS AVAILABLE.
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